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Teams designated to investigate origin of tank problem

Space station crew to discuss changes due to delayed launch

◆ **Shuttle Update:** Two investigation teams have been set up to look at the ECO sensor system on Atlantis' external tank. The first is a near-term team to look at the vehicle at the launch pad. The second is a longer-term team with experts from all around the agency. The near-term team has recommended doing an instrumented tanking test, which is tentatively scheduled for Dec. 18 at Kennedy. This will help the team observe what happens when the tank is filled and try to pinpoint the location of where the problems are occurring. During the tanking test, the liquid hydrogen tank will be fully filled.

According to Shuttle Program Manager Wayne Hale, "We're taking this step by step. We're going to go where the data leads us. We'll have a better idea of our launch date after the tanking test is done. Right now, our launch is targeted for no earlier than Jan. 2."

◆ **ISS Update:** NASA will hold two news conferences **today** to discuss the status of the International Space Station and the work of the Expedition 16 crew. NASA Television will broadcast both events live, and reporters will be able to

ask questions from participating NASA locations.

At 10:10 a.m., Expedition 16 Commander Peggy Whitson and Flight Engineer Dan Tani will field questions from reporters about upcoming events during a 20-minute news conference from aboard the station. The crew's activities are changing because space shuttle Atlantis' mission to the station has been delayed until January. Before that shuttle flight, a Russian Progress resupply ship will dock to the complex on Dec. 26.

At 1 p.m., space station managers will hold a briefing that will originate from NASA's Johnson Space Center featuring Kirk Shireman, International Space Station deputy program manager; Holly Ridings, Expedition 16 lead flight director; and Ginger Kerrick, space station flight director.



■ **Coffee Reminder —** Center Director Bill Parsons invites all civil service and contractor employees to enjoy refreshments and exchange greetings of the season with friends and co-workers at the KSC Learning Institute from 8:30 to 10 a.m. **Friday.**

■ **Last Chance for Shopping —** NASA Exchange has a 20-percent-off sale through Dec. 21 on all wearable items and memorabilia items. There is still time to purchase that great gift before leaving for the holidays. Also, don't forget to sign up for the weekly drawing running through Dec. 21.



■ **Holiday Open House by RehabWorks —** Join the staff between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Dec. 18 in the O&C/Room 1135 to celebrate the holidays and RehabWorks' 10th anniversary. Food and beverages, injury handouts and giveaways, plus consultations will be provided. Don't miss the drawings for Thermophore Heat Packs, Biofreeze, Polos and more!

■ **NASA Science —** NASA's fleet of THEMIS satellites has made some surprising new discoveries about outbursts of Northern Lights and the source of their power. The discoveries began in March, less than a month after the THEMIS satellites were activated. Findings include giant magnetic ropes that connect Earth to the sun and explosions in the outskirts of Earth's magnetic field. Read the full story at http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2007/11dec_themis.htm?list29875.

Countdown is published every Tuesday & Thursday for NASA KSC employees. Deadlines are 10 a.m. Mondays & Wednesdays. E-mail news to anita.barrett@jpbosc.ksc.nasa.gov. For questions or information, e-mail or call 321-867-2815. You can also find *Countdown* on the Web at nasa.gov/centers/kennedy/news/countdown/countdown-toc.html.

Do You Know These Dates In History?

- ◆ Dec. 13, 1577: Sir Francis Drake began his voyage to circumnavigate the globe.
- ◆ Dec. 20, 1606: Three ships set sail from London en route to America where colonists would establish the first European colony at Jamestown, Va.
- ◆ Dec. 21, 1913: The first crossword puzzle was published, in a supplement to the *New York World*.